



# The JOURNAL

The newspaper of the Parish of St John the Baptist, Andover.  
Including: St John Fisher, Whitchurch and  
The Chapel of St Theresa of Lisieux, Farleigh

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## Canonization Dates

Speaking during the general audience held on 20<sup>th</sup> November, Pope Francis announced: “I want to say that next year, on the day of adolescents, I will canonise Blessed Carlo Acutis, and on the day of the youth next year, I will canonise Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati.”



Pope Francis will inaugurate the Jubilee of Hope on 24 December of this year, launching a special Holy Year that will last through all of 2025, and which he will close on 6 January 2026. A special Jubilee for Adolescents will be held 25-27 April, during which Acutis will be formally canonised. Later next year, a special Jubilee for Young People will be observed from 28 July to 3 August, during which Frassati will be canonised, likely on Sunday, 3 August.

Acutis, known to many as the “techie saint”, was born to Italian parents in London in 1991, and spent most of his life in Milan. His family visited Assisi for a stretch every year around Easter, as it was Acutis’s favourite place, and is where he asked to be buried.

He is most widely known for his expertise in computer technology, spending much of his spare time designing an online exhibition about Eucharistic miracles around the world, and which is still a point of reference for Catholics. Given his young age and knack for computers, Acutis has been presented as a role model for youth, a “saint of the ordinary” and also a possible patron saint for IT workers. He died from an aggressive form of leukaemia in 2006 at the age of 15, and his beatification process began in 2013.

In *Christus Vivit* (“Christ Lives”), Pope Francis’s exhortation about young people, he called Acutis a role model for contemporary young people who are frequently tempted by the illusions of “self-absorption, isolation and empty pleasure. Carlo was well-aware that the whole apparatus of communications, advertising and social networking can be used to lull us, to make us addicted to consumerism and buying the latest thing on the market, obsessed with our free time, caught up in negativity,” the Pope said.

In February 2020, Pope Francis recognised the miraculous healing of a young boy in Brazil from a rare form of pancreatic cancer that was attributed to Acutis’s intercession, and in October that year the teen was beatified during a Mass at the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi. Acutis, who would be 33 if he were still alive, will be the Catholic Church’s first millennial to be canonised.

Over the summer, on 4 July, Archbishop Roberto Repole of Turin, where Frassati is from, inaugurated a special “Frassatian Year” of devotion in the lead up to the 100th anniversary of Frassati’s death on July 4, 1925.

(Continued on Page Two)



Father Austin, Father Simon, Deacon Michael, Teresa  
and the editors of The Journal  
wish each and every one of you a  
blessed, peaceful and healthy  
Christmas and New Year



# Special Youth Event

**The** Chaplaincy Team at Oaklands Catholic School, in collaboration with Canon PJ and the Educational Chaplaincies Department, invite schools, parish youth groups and confirmation groups to an exciting event on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2025.



The Catholic Church is about to enter into the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025. As part of the year of celebrations, Pope Francis has called for “24-Hours for the Lord” during Lent in 2025. On **Friday 28th March there will be** an all-night vigil of prayer and Adoration.

The event will officially begin at 5.00pm, but groups are welcome to arrive from 4.00pm (dinner will be available at 6.00pm). The programme will include Mass with Bishop Philip, talks from the Dominican Sisters of St Joseph, and small group discussions, with the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Stations of the Cross, as well as continuous Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, which will be exposed in a special, festival-style bell tent on the school’s Sunken Lawn. The organisers promise that there will also be plenty of time for fun and fellowship!

This is an all-night event, which will finish at 9.00am on Saturday morning. Young people must come as part of a group, and due to the nature of the event, young people must be in Year 9 or above to attend. Group leaders need to register the group’s interest to help with planning. The organisers are asking for a £100 donation from each group, mainly to cover catering costs. For a group of ten young people this is just £10 a head, but if this is going to be a problem, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the organisers. For more information email Sarah Farrell [s.farrell@oaklandscatholicsschool.org](mailto:s.farrell@oaklandscatholicsschool.org) with any questions or queries.



*(continued from the Front Page)*

Frassati, an Italian Catholic activist and a member of the Third Order of Saint Dominic, was born on 6 April 1901 in Turin into a wealthy, agnostic family. Early on in his life, he was drawn to the Faith and to service of the poor, gaining a reputation for his intense and active prayer life, as well as his great love of the outdoors, especially hiking and mountain climbing.

Described by friends as “an explosion of joy”, Frassati attended a Jesuit school and joined various faith groups as an adolescent. He was also known as an avid sportsman and as a lover of the arts, including theatre, opera, museums and poetry. He was deeply devoted to Catholic social teaching and service to the poor, and he translated this into social activism, eventually joining the People’s Party, based on the principles of Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.

In addition to his political activism, Frassati was known to go out and serve the poor in the city slums, often giving away his bus fare money and then sprinting home to arrive for mealtime. His political advocacy led him to oppose the communist as well as fascist causes in early 20th-century Italy, including one instance when he stood up to police for harassing a Church-sponsored protest in Rome, grabbing a fallen banner and using it to rally fellow students.

In 1922, Frassati joined the Lay Dominicans, but soon after, shortly before receiving his degree as a mining engineer, he contracted polio, which his doctors believed was due to his tending to the sick in the slums.

He died on 4 July 1925, at the age of 24, using some of his final moments to scribble a note asking a friend to take medicine to a poor man. In 1981, his remains were found to be incorrupt, meaning they had not decomposed, and his body was transferred from the family tomb to the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Turin.

At his beatification in 1990, St. John Paul II referred to Frassati as the “Man of the Eight Beatitudes”, adding: “I wanted to pay homage to a young man who was able to witness to Christ with singular effectiveness in this century of ours. When I was a young man, I, too, felt the beneficial influence of his example and, as a student, I was impressed by the force of his testimony.”

# The Turin Shroud Re-evaluated - Again!

The forty-odd square feet of linen known as the Shroud of Turin has been the centre of controversy for nearly seven hundred years. First coming to light in France in 1354 and claimed to be the cloth in which Christ's body was wrapped before being placed in the sepulchre, the Shroud was almost instantly denounced as a fake by the Bishop of Troyes but continued to attract devotion by the faithful.

Finding its way eventually to Turin and secured in a specially created chapel, the Shroud has remained there and has been subjected to scientific study in attempts to judge its authenticity.

In 1898 the photographer Secondo Pia, using a huge bellows-type camera with Voigtlander lens and large artificial lights powered by a generator, took several photographs. Only one, using a fourteen-minute exposure was successful. His work revealed that the image on the Shroud was a natural negative, so the negative plate showed a positive image which was recognisable as a gaunt, bearded man with long hair and wounds on the wrists, feet and side. Professor Giulio Fanti from the University of Padua who has researched the Shroud for many years says the image is consistent with that of a man who had been cruelly tortured, crowned with thorns and crucified.

In 1988 Professor Edward Hall's Oxford based laboratory collaborated with laboratories in Arizona and Zurich to examine tiny pieces of material from the Shroud using leading edge eighties carbon dating techniques. They reported they were 95% confident that the Shroud dated from some time between AD 1290 and 1390. Ergo, it must be a fake.

However, science does not stand still. Different research discovered the presence of pollen found exclusively in Palestine, and this year a single flaxen thread was examined by an independent laboratory specializing in the latest methods of applied crystallography (which looks for alterations in atomic structures which reflect degradation over time) concluded that the results were compatible with measurements from a piece of linen known to date from the first century siege of Massada. Ergo, it must be genuine.

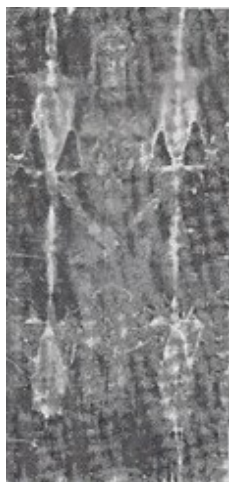
As a Punch cartoonist might have put it "Collapse of stout party". But the scientists who support the carbon dating results are not prepared to admit defeat, and Dr de Caro, who led the applied crystallography team, also suggests that it is desirable for several similar experiments on several samples be carried out.

Now, Mr Cicero Moraes who is regarded as a world leading authority on forensic facial reconstruction, has approached the matter from a different angle. He used reconstruction software to show that the cloth could not have enveloped a human corpse. A computer simulation in which fabric was wrapped over a body resulted in the image being very distorted and quite unlike the image on the Shroud. Mr Moraes insisted that when a three-dimensional object such as a blood smeared human body is wrapped in fabric the object leaves a pattern of blood stains which is more robust and deformed in relation to the source. The body would appear swollen and distorted, not like a photocopy. If, however, a shallow bas-relief was wrapped in the cloth the image would not be deformed.

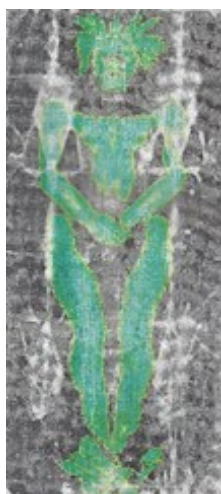
Mr Moraes said there are two camps: "On one side are those who think it is the authentic shroud of Jesus Christ, on the other, those who think it is a forgery." He himself concluded that the Shroud is a work of Christian art designed to inspire rather than delude believers, and that as such this "non-verbal iconographic work has very successfully served the purpose of the religious message contained within."

The three illustrations below show an actual photograph of the Shroud of Turin, a 3D virtual simulation of the image left by a human body, and the image that might be produced when a cloth is placed over a shallow carving of a body.

These arguments and new research are certainly significant, but the authenticity of the shroud being the actual burial cloth of Jesus and the image being of Our Saviour must remain unproven by science alone. Once again, we leave the last word to Professor De Caro: "Science can take us only to a certain point. Everything beyond that is a matter of faith."



Photograph of the image which we see on the Shroud



3D virtual simulation of the of the image Moraes claims a human body would leave.



Image Moraes says would be left by a bas-relief carving of a body.

# Mass for Mini Vinnies



Last month Bishop Philip went to St Peter and the Winchester Martyrs parish to offer Mass for the Mini Vinnies, the youngest members of the St Vincent de Paul Society. There is an active group of Mini Vinnies in our own parish school of St John the Baptist, and they were represented at the Mass as you will see in the monthly report from the school elsewhere in this Journal.

The bishop told the children that he grew up in the parish of St Vincent in Altrincham and attended St Vincent's school. Years later he was ordained to the priesthood in that church of St Vincent. The bishop commented that St Vincent was an amazing man. Here is some of what the bishop mentioned in his homily at that Mass in Winchester:

"Vincent came from the South of France from a very poor family. His father was a farm labourer; he had two sisters and three brothers. As a child Vincent wanted to become a priest, and he was ordained very young at 19. As a priest he began to live a comfortable life. He was the chaplain to a very wealthy family.

However, one day, he was asked to hear the confessions of some poor farm-labourers, and he found himself very moved because it made him think of his own family. So he stopped being a chaplain and instead began serving farmers, the homeless, the poor, the sick. He went up and down France caring for anyone in need.

Eventually, he set up a community of priests, the Vincentians, and also nuns, the Daughters of Charity to care for the poor; they founded hospitals and foodbanks. People called him *The Apostle of Charity*. He was an amazing character, very kind, fun to be with.

A hard worker, he got up at 4.00am and went to bed at 9.00pm. Eventually his health broke down and he became bedridden. He died in 1660 at the age of 80, but his work continues today. There are now 6,000 priests in the Vincentians and 46,000 Daughters of Charity.

Later, another Frenchman, Frederick Ozanam, was inspired by St. Vincent's example to form SVP groups in parishes, to care for the poor. Today, most parishes have an SVP. As a Mini-Vinny, it's great: you follow in the footsteps of St. Vincent de Paul.

Jesus tells us to *love God with all your heart, with all your soul, your mind, your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself*. Jesus then explains what it means to love your neighbour. He tells us the Parable of the Good Samaritan. St. Vincent was truly a Good Samaritan, who went through the countryside caring for the sick, the poor, the lost and the lonely. That's what Jesus did. It's what Jesus asks all of us to do, as His disciples: to love and care for those in need.

As a mini-Vinny it's fantastic to think that you too are a Good Samaritan to those in need. God has asked you to be a modern St. Vincent de Paul caring for the needy. As your Bishop, I must say, I'm very proud of you! Thank you so much for all your work as a Mini-Vinny.

In this Mass, let us thank God for calling us to help. Let us pray for His blessing on all the good work we do and the people we serve. Let us ask Him to help us love God and to love others, to be Good Samaritans to those in need. Indeed, let us pray that we will become more like St. Vincent de Paul, a true Apostle of Charity?"



## Bamenda

On Bamenda Sunday the Diocese celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Diocesan link with the Archdiocese of Bamenda, Cameroon. Bishop Philip has asked that we pray for a peaceful resolution to the political crisis in Bamenda and for the priests generously sent here from the Archdiocese to serve in the Diocese of Portsmouth:

- Fr Gaston Afah Forbah (English Martyrs, Reading and Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation)
- Fr Emmanuel Rinda, (Corpus Christi & St Joseph's, Portsmouth)
- Fr Elijah Fru Nde, (Christ the King & St Colman Bitterne and Hedge End & West End)
- Fr Anthony Njingo (Immaculate Conception, Portsmouth)
- Fr Benedict Ndikum (Assistant Priest in Winchester)

The second collection taken during Bamenda weekend is the main source of annual income for the various joint projects our Bamenda Funds will support.

Donations can also be made securely on line at [www.bamendaandportsmouth.com](http://www.bamendaandportsmouth.com) If you can set up a standing order, this would really help the Bamenda Committee to assess how many project applications we can afford to support. Please download a form from the same Donate page. Many thanks for your support.

# Seminarian Nathan King

**M**any in our congregation will remember the visits to our parish by Fr Matthew King when he was still a seminarian studying at the English College in Rome. His brother Nathan joined him here on occasion. Nathan is now himself a seminarian. As you can see from the brief article below, Nathan has been formally accepted as a Candidate for the priesthood. Writing for the Diocesan Vocations Newsletter he writes:

"I am now in my 4th year at Allen Hall seminary in Chelsea. 'Sheesh', time waits for no one. My placement for this year is at St Patricks Church in Soho. I am involved in working with the homeless on Thursday nights. I am studying theology now, having finished philosophy. This year is called Second Configuration. First Configuration being my placement at the Portsmouth Cathedral last year. This year of theology is helping me grow closer to Christ and form an even stronger friendship with him in order to spread his light and love to those I meet.

My placement at the Cathedral last year has given me valuable experience, maturity and encouragement to continue the journey to priesthood. Some of the activities and events I took part in include:

- Assisting and teaching First Holy Communion.
- Setting up, serving and reading at Mass.
- Helping and Assisting with RCIA Enquiry Group.
- Working at St John's Primary School Teaching about the Ascension & Pentecost.
- Working at St Edmund's School assisting at Mass, (Classroom visits), Vocation Day, Speaking about Mass and Confession.
- Attending Lectio Divina sessions.
- Assisting at Funerals.
- Assisting at Baptisms.
- Writing bidding prayers and reflections for the newsletter.
- Opening up and locking the Cathedral.
- Working with the youth group.
- Helping with youth group preparation, having meetings, and giving presentations.
- Assisting Bishop Philip with Confirmation Masses around the Diocese and at the Cathedral.
- Visiting the sick and housebound.
- Creating liturgical videos.

What I learned from my placement and will be taking with me into this year is: To know how much we are loved by God. That our faith is a response to the revealing God. To use our gifts and talents for the glory of God. To treat others as you would like to be treated.

Four years ago, I was doing a propaedeutic year, a discernment year, at Sacred Heart Church in Fareham. I learnt a lot about myself in that year, it got me ready for major seminary. If anyone is feeling a call to the priesthood and would like to talk to someone please get in contact with Fr Chris and Cn John, as I did, they are wonderful priests and will be able to help you answer any questions you may have.

God bless,

*Nathan*

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## Candidates

**O**n Saturday 26th October, Bishop Philip went to Allen Hall Seminary in Chelsea to celebrate the College feast day Mass in honour of the Douai Martyrs and to formally accept Francis Ezeani and Nathan King as Candidates for Holy Orders. This is an important step in their journey of formation to the priesthood.

In his homily, Bishop Philip said that they were offering the Mass in honour of the Douai Martyrs, those 158 priests who gave their lives for the Catholic faith between 1577 and 1680. Allen Hall is the proud heir to their tradition.

He spoke of Edmund Campion who worked in the South of England and was arrested at Lyford Grange, near Maidenhead, in our diocese. Campion was tortured in the Tower, tried for treason, condemned to death, and hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn. He gave an outstanding testimony to his faith on the scaffold.

The bishop explained that the word martyr comes from the Greek 'marturein', meaning a witness, and he pointed out the two new martyrs, Francis Ezeani and Nathan King, who presented themselves as candidates for the priesthood. They were generously offering their lives in service of Christ and His Church and asking God's blessing upon their intention, committing themselves to prepare in earnest to become a priest.

Bishop Philip concluded that the Douai Martyrs ministered in an era different from ours, an era of change, danger and uncertainty when Catholicism was illegal. To be a Jesuit was to be a traitor, and to be a priest meant sure arrest. Today, Catholics have much more freedom, at least for the moment, yet this too is an era of change, and even danger, when simply to speak the truth can stir up anger and rejection. This is why Francis, Nathan and all of us need to rely on God's grace, to learn from the Martyrs and to seek their prayers.



# Closing of the Synod

**A**t a press conference following the conclusion of the General Synod on Synodality, Synod leaders discussed the *Final Document*. They pointed to the need to shift the language and perspective with which we understand the Church. Moving away from a vision of the universal Church as a kind of multinational corporation, the Church is instead to be seen as a “communion of Churches,” with growing contributions from laypersons and women to create a less hierarchical Church.

The term “universal Church” is reframed to emphasise unity within diversity, seeing local Churches not as subordinate levels but as unique expressions of faith within a single Body of Christ. Mgr Battocchio indicated that the document points the way toward a united journey marked by plurality, a journey reflective of the Church’s origins. This vision calls the Church to conversion encouraging deeper, more diverse ecclesial relationships.

Pope Francis has written a note to accompany the Final Document, a text that captures the results of the two-year-long Synod of Bishops on Synodality which Pope Francis called for in October 2021 that concluded in October 2024.

In his note, Pope Francis writes that from its very creation, the synodal path has been characterised by openness to the voice of the Holy Spirit. This spirit has guided the Church across continents, languages, and cultures.

“This journey,” Pope Francis writes, “has allowed the Church to read her own experiences and identify steps to live communion, realise participation, and promote the mission entrusted to her by Christ.”

He describes how this synodal journey actually began at the local level, moving then through national and continental phases. Now that the Assembly has concluded, Pope Francis entrusts the Final Document and its contents back to the local Churches, whom he invites to implement the contents of the Document with discernment, creativity, and respect for their unique contexts.

Pope Francis then goes on to describe the Document as part of the “ordinary Magisterium of the Successor of Peter” and asks that its authoritative nature be respected as such. “It represents a form of exercising the authentic teaching of the Bishop of Rome”, explains the Pope, adding that “it contains elements of novelty but aligns with what I clarified on October 17, 2015, when I stated that synodality is the proper interpretive framework for understanding hierarchical ministry”.

However, he clarifies that the Document “is not strictly normative” but rather a call for reflection differently applied in each context.

He also reiterates “the conclusion of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops does not mark the end of the synodal process”. Instead, he says, it marks the beginning of a phase of implementation, and “local Churches and their groupings are now called to implement, in different contexts, the authoritative directions contained in the Document through discernment and decision-making processes foreseen by canon law and the Document itself”.

Pope Francis then goes on to entrust the General Secretariat of the Synod and the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia with the task of accompanying local Churches as they work to effectively implement the synodal vision. Bishops, too, he continues, “will report on the choices made in their local Church concerning the indications in the Final Document, the difficulties encountered, and the fruits achieved, and are called to report on progress during their *ad limina* visits, sharing both challenges and fruits of their efforts”.

The Pope encourages bishops to approach this phase with courage, creativity, and humility, acknowledging that it will take time to address certain issues that require consensus across the global Church.

Bringing his note to a close Pope Francis reminds all the faithful that the synodal journey “needs shared words to be accompanied by deeds”, before expressing his hope that the Holy Spirit, as the “harmony” of the Church, will continue to renew and guide her, leading her to full communion with Christ.



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## Bishops’ Conference Meeting

**T**he Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales met recently at Hinsley Hall, Leeds. All the bishops of England and Wales attended, including the Bishop of the Forces, the Bishop of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, the Ukrainian Eparch, the Syro-Malabar Eparch, and the Apostolic Administrator of the Prefecture of the Falkland Islands.

There was much discussion of the assisted suicide bill which was before Parliament, and also safeguarding and its arrangements in the life of the Church. Most of Monday and Tuesday was dedicated to those topics, and to environmental matters.

On the subject of the assisted suicide bill, the bishops concluded their statement by saying: “When you are praying, please remember those who offer such care and accompaniment to people facing their last days and hours. Especially pray for those who work in palliative care – nurses, doctors, people who are home visitors. They do a wonderful job with care and compassion, but they need more resources. That is what we should be investing in, **not** a piece of legislation that leaves us vulnerable and under pressure to seek an end to our life.” (*Continued on Page 11*)

# St Silvester I

According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, the Book of the Popes, Silvester was the son of a Roman names Rufinus. Silvester became pope shortly after the three edicts of toleration by the Roman emperors Galerius, which ended the persecution of Christians, Maxentius which restored church property to Pope Miltiades, and Constantine the Great, which final edict raised the status of Christianity.

Legend has it that following Constantine's conversion to Christianity, he was baptised by Silvester and cured of leprosy. In gratitude for his recovery, Constantine allegedly endowed the pope and his successors with numerous gifts including sovereignty over the provinces of Italy. However, this story of the "Donation of Constantine", which was embroidered and used for political and pontifical ends during the Middle Ages, has long been recognized as a fabrication.

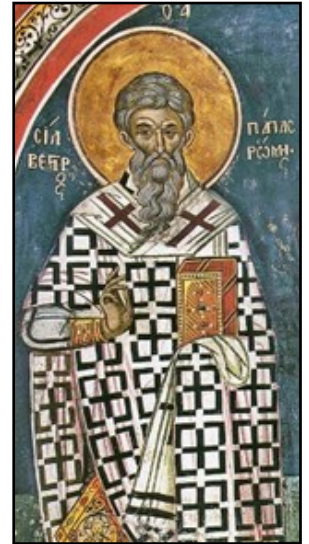
Within a year of his accession to the papacy, Silvester was represented at a synod convened in Arles to deal with the schism caused by the Donatists. The Donatist sect argued that Christian clergy must be faultless for their ministry to be effective and their prayers and sacraments to be valid. The Church, they insisted, must be a Church of saints. Those who had handed over their scriptures during the persecution of Diocletian, known as *traditores*, they argued, could never be forgiven even after confession and repentance. The bishops assembled in Arles commended Pope Silvester for not attending the synod in person but remaining in the place "where the Apostles daily sit in judgement."

Ten years later, in 325, there assembled at Nicaea the first ecumenical or general council of the Church. It is believed that over 220 bishops, mostly orientals, attended. Silvester again sent legates from Rome. The council condemned the heresy of Arius, founder of the Arian heresy which denied Christ's divinity, but the heresy caused a devastating struggle within the Church which continued in various forms for many years to come.

The palace of the Lateran was gifted to Silvester by Constantine, and there the pope set up his *cathedra* and established the Lateran Basilica as the cathedral church of Rome.

During Silvester's pontificate the emperor, who had removed his capital from Rome to Byzantium, built the first churches to St Peter on the Vatican Hill, Holy Cross in Jerusalem, and St Laurence outside the Walls. St Silvester also built a church at the cemetery of Priscilla on the Salarian Way, and he himself was buried there in 335. His relics were translated in 761 by Pope Paul I to the church of St Silvester in Capite, which is now the national church of English Catholics in Rome.

His feast is celebrated as Saint Sylvester's Day, on 31 December in Western Christianity, and on 2 January in Eastern Christianity.



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## Chamber Choir Christmas Concert

ANDOVER  
CHAMBER  
CHOIR

*Star in  
the east*

A CONCERT  
FOR CHRISTMAS

7:00 pm Saturday, 21 December 2024  
St Mary's Church, Andover

Tickets £15 (incl. refreshments) on the door or £13 in advance  
from Newbury Building Society, The Lights and choir members  
Under-16s admitted free

In aid of the Boaz Project  
www.andoverchamberchoir.org.uk

Once again, the much-anticipated Christmas concert from Andover Chamber Choir is to take place at St. Mary's, Andover.

This year entitled 'Star from the East' the programme includes many familiar carols including some for all to sing and some less well known gems together with poetry – all telling the story of the Nativity and subsequent visit of the Magi. Items vary from plainchant to recent pieces by the choir's former musical director Andrew Wyndham and also includes joyful carols and arrangements from John Rutter, Andrew Carter and Philip Ledger.

To mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Gustav Holst, the concert ends with the composer's tune packed piece entitled 'Christmas Day'.

This year's event is in aid of the Boaz Project an inclusive farm-based charity at Sutton Scotney which aims to provide a brighter future for people with learning disabilities. Last year their concert raised £1200 and the choir hopes to beat that this year! The concert will take place on Saturday 21st December at 7pm. Tickets including refreshments cost £15 on the door or £13 in advance from The Lights (in-person and online), The Newbury Building Society and Choir members. Under 16s are admitted free.

[www.andoverchamberchoir.org.uk](http://www.andoverchamberchoir.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/AndoverChamberChoir](https://www.facebook.com/AndoverChamberChoir)

# Gladiator II



This is a Ridley Scott film, and they are always worth watching. However, it's not the best he's ever done and it's not as good, by a long chalk, as the original *Gladiator* (2000). As to why? That's quite simple. There's not enough story in it to drive the two hours plus that it's on screen. Plenty of plot (i.e., things that happen) but that ain't the same thing. Otherwise; perfectly good, well, for the most part.

The film is set a generation after the time of the original *Gladiator*. At the end of that, Russell Crowe kills Emperor Commodus in the Colosseum and is vindicated in his revenge. In this follow-on, lead actor Paul Mescal is taken to Rome and trained as a gladiator after his city is invaded by the Romans and he is captured. Less than happy at this train of events, Mr Mescal, a full-on warrior of his homeland, is determined to kill the Roman General that commanded the attack.

So good, so far; then we get to see that the current joint Emperors, brothers Geeta and Caracalla, are even more unpleasant than Commodus ever was and much more unhinged. As such, the General decides they have to be removed from the equation and gladiator Paul gets unwittingly sucked into this political maelstrom. Best thing whilst watching is to go with the flow as what is happening plot-wise is still coherently plausible.

By the end of the film, gladiator Paul is clearly the only last man standing with any working moral compass and he demonstrates this by stopping the two remaining armed Roman factions killing each other. It's also discovered he is the natural grandson of Emperor Marcus Aurelius, who was the last of the group of good Emperors of the second century. At this point Director Ridley Scott ends the film.

What does keep this film moving along and it has to be said, at a fair lick, are the action sequences. Think steam train at full throttle. Right from the start of his career, Ridley Scott has been on top of how you inject action into a film and when. The attack on Paul Mescal's city is as good as the assault on the White House in *Civil War*. And since the title of the film is "Gladiator", there's lots of Colosseum action. As you'd expect, all of this is hand-to-hand, up close and personal.

This time Director Ridley uses CGI to have the human gladiators fighting wild beasts as much as human opponents. All as actually happened in the Colosseum Games. Unfortunately he then goes way over the top. He has Paul and comrades in the Arena attacked by a mounted rider. Fine, except the rider isn't on a war stallion or even an elephant. He's saddled – yes, saddled - on a grown rhino that he can (and does) control like a horse. Really...? Do not think so. Fortunately, our guys win, and the film proceeds on to its more conventional ending. But from that point on, this watcher pretty well gave up. Certainly watch it yourself but wait till it comes on television.

John Newland

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## Devotion to Our Lady of Fatima

Bishop Philip has encouraged parishioners to embrace the First Saturday devotion to Our Lady of Fatima. The shrine of Fatima is one of the foremost Marian shrines in Europe. Our Lady first mentioned devotion to her Immaculate Heart to the three children, Lucia, Francisco and Jacintha, on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 1917. She reportedly said to them: "You have seen hell, where souls of poor sinners go. To save them God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace."

On 10th December 1925 Jesus and Mary came to Lucia and requested the First Saturday Devotion. "I promise salvation to those who embrace it, and these souls will be loved by God, like flowers placed by me to adorn his throne".

When we fulfil the requirements for making this devotion, as revealed by Our Lady, we make reparation for the thorns of blasphemies and ingratitude which pierce Our Lady's Immaculate Heart and by which she is offended. Our Lady then promises to assist those souls who make this devotion "at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation".

Our Lord told Sr Lucia that the 5 Saturdays represent the offences against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. "My daughter, the reason is simple. There are five types of offenses and blasphemies committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary: 1. Blasphemies against the Immaculate Conception; 2. Blasphemies against Her Virginity; 3. Blasphemies against Her Divine Maternity, in refusing at the same time to recognise her as the Mother of mankind; 4. The blasphemies of those who publicly seek to sow in the hearts of children, indifference, or scorn or even hatred of this Immaculate Mother; 5. The offenses of those who outrage her directly in her holy images. Here, my daughter, is the reason why the Immaculate Heart of Mary inspired Me to ask for this little act of reparation." (May 29, 1930)

How to Practice the Five First Saturday's Devotion:

- 1) Confession: Make a good confession within 8 days before or after the first Saturday
- 2) Receive Holy Communion. As a Communion of reparation
- 3) The Communion should be received on the first Saturday of the month.
- 4) Pray 5 decades of the Holy Rosary with the intention of making reparation to Our Lady's Immaculate Heart
- 5) 15 minutes meditation on the mysteries of the Holy Rosary.

All with the intention of offering reparation for the offences against Our Lady's Immaculate Heart.

For more resources and details on how to practice this devotion, visit the Fatima website.



## The Pope's Intentions

**E**ach year, the Holy Father asks for our prayers for a specific intention each month. The Pope's monthly prayer intentions alternate between prayers for Evangelization and prayers for a Universal theme. In this month of December, as we start the Jubilee Year, he asks us to pray that we might become Pilgrims of Hope: We pray that this Jubilee Year will strengthen our faith, helping us to recognise the Risen Christ in our daily lives, and that it may transform us into pilgrims of Christian hope.

Don't forget to pick up your copy of the Companion Booklet to the Jubilee Year from the church porch.

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## Joy to the World the Lord is Come!

**D**oes God smile? Years ago, when I was a seminarian, I was sitting in the chapel praying. Another seminarian from Korea, who was also praying, turned to me and asked, "Chris, in the Bible, when is Jesus happy?"

I was caught off guard by the question. My mind raced to find an answer. Eventually, I replied, "I don't know but I am sure he did experience joy in his life." It was sometime after that I encountered the passage in Luke's Gospel (10:17-24) where, after the seventy disciples returned with joy from the mission, Jesus rejoiced with them.

Yet, the question always bothered me. As a child, when we entered the church, we were always told to be quiet, don't laugh, don't speak loudly etc, as if God was offended that happy people came to church. Maybe because of this, it's easier to maintain an image of God that is stoic, distant and strict. I often ask myself, does God smile? After all, didn't Jesus warn us about such appearances, "Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face..." (Matt 6:16)

In a homiletics class teaching us the art of preaching, the professor one day divided us into small groups of four. We practised preaching a homily in our small group so that later we could be critiqued by our peers and the professor. After I gave my homily, one classmate said to me, "You did something that I have never experienced before in a homily, you smiled at me." I was taken aback. I was unaware I did so, but everyone reassured me that it was a good thing.

Sadly, a priest smiling while preaching is not a common experience for the faithful. But St Teresa of Avila, the 16th century mystic prayed, 'Good Lord deliver us from silly devotions and sour-faced saints!' When as a priest I was studying for a degree in spirituality, the professor in one class asked all of us to anonymously write on a small piece of paper one thing we do to make a difference in the Church. I wrote that I smile in church. The professor read out some of the notes including mine to which the class burst out laughing. However, the professor asked why they were all laughing. "Why is a smile so radical in Christianity?"

St Teresa of Avila reminds us, "What would happen if we hid what little sense of humour we had? Let each of us humbly use this to cheer others."

When does God smile? God smiles when we express joy and rejoice. God smiles when Christians smile. Let us be radical in our faith and smile for God! A smile can evangelise more than any words we can say.

*Fr Chris Saenz*

*This article first appeared in "Far East", the magazine of the Columban Missionaries*

[www.columbans.co.uk](http://www.columbans.co.uk)



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## Healing Prayers Group

The Healing Prayers Group meets in the parish church each Tuesday evening between 6.30pm and 7.00pm.

If you would like to choose a theme, scripture reading and music, or would like a copy of the El Shaddai Healing Prayer or if you would like any further information, please contact the parish office.



## From the School

**N**ovember is a special month of remembrance in the school community. The month began when we celebrated two important feast days, All Saints Day and All Souls Day.

On November 11<sup>th</sup> the school held its Remembrance Service to mark Armistice Day. The whole school community gathered together in silence in the playground, children, staff, visitors and families, with Year 2's Farleigh Friends who visited specially for the service. Year 6 led the reflections and shared extracts from Gittelsohn's "Gates of Prayer": "In the rising of the sun and in its going down, we remember them". A poppy wreath was laid, and the two minute's silence solemnly observed. The school received a letter of thanks from the Royal British Legion for helping to raise funds through the Poppy Appeal.

Every November schools across the UK participate in the Anti-Bullying week, an opportunity to consider effective steps to stop bullying. The theme this year was "Choose Respect." At the end of the week useful feedback is gathered from children and parents which helps to review and update the school's policies and procedures.

The school's Year 4 Mini Vinnies are living examples of putting faith into action. As part of the worldwide St Vincent de Paul Family they follow the mission of helping others through acts of kindness, charity, and service, embodying the values of compassion and community. Five of the Mini Vinnies were invited to join similar groups from across the diocese to celebrate a special Mass with Bishop Philip at St Peter's Church in Winchester. After Mass the children with other groups and helpers taking part in activities and conversing with others, including Bishop Philip who remembered receiving letters from the Year 4 Mini Vinnies earlier this year. He commented on the excellent quality of their work and their understanding of his motto and badge.

Deacon Michael was recently welcomed into school to lead a reverent and uplifting Benediction. It was a time of reflection, prayer, and thanksgiving, and an opportunity for the school community to gather, pray and deepen faith together.

The boys and girls Year 5 football teams went to Balksbury for a mini-tournament. Though our B teams were up against A teams from bigger schools they played with great spirit and managed 3 draws. The Girls' A team finished as runners-up in their competition, while the Boys team went one better winning overall. Well done to all the players

Mrs Whatley, the staff and children of St John the Baptist School thank Father Austin and Deacon Michael for their help and support throughout the term, and wish them and all the families, friends and parishioners a happy, holy and peaceful Christmas.



## News from Douai

**I**n the lead up to Christmas, Abbot Christopher Jamison will lead a retreat for young adults here at Douai. The Advent retreat, A Path through Christmas, will take place from Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December to Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December.

You can see a video about the retreat on the Abbey website. For further information or to book a place email [guestmaster@douaiabbey.org.uk](mailto:guestmaster@douaiabbey.org.uk) or call 01189 715 399

The monastery's publishing imprint, Weldon Press, is shortly to release its first full, solo production, the first full biography of Bishop Christopher Butler OSB, one of the leading and most influential anglophone voices at the Second Vatican Council.

You can find out more about the book, of which only 250 copies will be printed, and pre-order a copy (with a 10% discount and free postage in the UK) on the Abbey website.

Bishop Christopher Butler OSB was elected Abbot President of the English Benedictine Congregation on the eve of the Second Vatican Council. As a result, he was summoned to the sacred synod as one of the Council Fathers. He became a leading progressive anglophone voice on the Council floor. Yet, like most people, he was not a monochrome figure, and his 'career' as monk, abbot, abbot president and, after the Council, bishop sheds light on the Council and the conciliar period more generally. His impact on the Church in England and Wales especially was significant, though his influence spread as far as North America.



*(Bishops' Conference Meeting Continued from Page 6)*

At their conference, the bishops expressed their "profound gratitude to the Holy Father for the publication of the fourth Encyclical Letter of his papacy *Dilexit Nos* on the human and divine love of the Heart of Jesus Christ."

They commented that: "The Person of Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour, God's revelation to humanity, is the source and centre of our Christian faith. In *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis proposes that we should always be 'Christ-centred people' who drink from the loving Heart of Christ in order that we become people 'capable of forging bonds of fraternity, of recognizing the dignity of each human being, and of working together to care for our common home'."

We thank the Holy Father for citing Julian of Norwich, St Claude de la Colombière and St John Henry Newman who are closely related with our lands. Indeed, he notes that it 'was in the Eucharist that Newman encountered the living heart of Jesus, capable of setting us free, giving meaning to each moment of our lives, and bestowing true peace.' We warmly commend this Encyclical for prayerful study and reflection that all may discover for themselves those "streams of living water" flowing from Christ's Heart 'that can heal the hurt we have caused, strengthen our ability to love and serve others, and inspire us to journey together towards a just, solidary and fraternal world.'"

The full text of the Encyclical is available from the Catholic Truth Society (CTS) or can be downloaded from the Vatican website.

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## Christmas Mass Times

**Tuesday 24th December Christmas Eve**

**The Nativity of Our Lord, Vigil Mass**

**Andover at 6.00pm and 9.30pm**

**Farleigh 10.00pm**

**Wednesday 25th December Christmas Day**

**The Nativity of Our Lord**

**Mass at Whitchurch 8.45am**

**Mass at Farleigh 10.00am**

**Mass at Andover 10.30am**

**Thursday 26th December**

**Feast of St Stephen**

**Mass at Andover 10.00am**

*Friday 27th December - No Mass or Service*



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**Please pray for those who have gone before us in November**

Your prayers are asked for Sharon Wood and John Foster and all who have died recently.

**and for those whose anniversaries occur in December**

Kathleen Witts, Susan White, William Kimmet, Michael Kavanagh, Ethna Casey, Anthony Mullen, Helena Maciejowska, Charles Holdway, Nora Webster, Timothy Cronin, Mdm Gable, Paddy Kidney, Daniel Mackrell, Thomas Cullen, Margaret Collins, Theresa Maye, Kathleen Maitland, Bob Burbidge, John Bruff, Jeanette Speckman, Mr Hayhurst, Daniel McKeever, Phyllis Eldridge, Eamon Toland, Theresa Freeman, Rose Thomas, Monica Young, Lawrence Murray, Doug Smith, Walter Keen, Sigrid Sullivan, Don Paterson, Harry Thorn, John Holmes, Nora Smith, Sarah Crouch, Mary Clark, Robert Magee, Mary Louise de-Sanfort Enhem, Col. Hampden Hughes. Peter Porter, Jeffrey Benson, Michael Wheen, Fr Tony McCoy, Rosemarie Watson. Eveline Edwards, Dorothy Baxter, Minnie Annable, Charlie Vooght, Tony Goulden, Aileen Ryder, Richard Eccles, Patrick Gallagher, Pat O'Hare, John Spencer, Gerard Flood, Daniel Barrett, Mary Gillespie, Hazel Gregory, Theresa Gittins, Will Dyke, Christina Savage, Lee Burt, Maud Line, James Reginald Baxter, Kathy Oliver, Sister Francis, Paul McPherson, Connie Demanuele, Herbert Neuen, Horst Richter, Margaret Davis, Bernadette Coquet, Peter Wheelright, Josie Durrans, James Gordon-Stables, Arthur Cash, Jacob Pearce, John McCormack Catherine Smith, Brian Godfrey, Mary Bacon, Fred Johnson, Monica Long, Patrick O'Connell, Annie Baulsen, Hugh Radcliffe, Margaret Collins, Theresa May, Brian Morgan, Francis Casey, Sidney Pillet, John Faye, Stefano Falcone, Martin Synan, Raymond Donovan, John Easterbee, Jeanette Speckman, Anton Toland, Lilian Sadler, George Otter, Paul Milner, Elizabeth Luxford, Gertrude Walford, Fr Chris Watt, Chris Dawson, Eileen Barnes, John Bernard Mulholland, Leis Hanson, Sigrid O'Sullivan, Kay McGlynn, Aileen Davies, Martin Cleary, Aileen Wallbank, Viviane Matejski, Kathleen Culleton, Mike Tasker, Lawrence Poland, Felicity Scicluna, John Kennedy, Ron Abbott, Dorothy Butcher, Angus McAllen-Topping, William Gittings, Dorothea Matheson, Patrick Mulholland, Charles Bird, Kathleen Kelleher, Aldo Mirra, Anne Grey, Neil Sharkey, Ann Tripp, John Woodward, Annie Maxwell, Richard Laversuch, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Rosalie Fitzgibbon, Pat McCumiskey, Bridget Walker, Di Mussert, and Baz Marshall

**During the month to come please remember in your prayers  
the following who are sick:**

Esme Coveney, Rita Lane, Margaret Williams, Patrick Arnold, Sheila Muir, Mary Oak, Bernard Ivinson, Fiona Hilleard, Tony Fabian, Helen O'Connell, Douglas Manning, Victor Trapani, Diane Mahoney, Catherine Ash, Sile Monnelly, Bill Jago, Linda Creaven, Rose Bull, Wendy Rawlings, Paul Owens, Tom O'Regan, John Baxter, June Saunders, Jane O'Kelly, Rose Bull and all those in need of our prayers

*If you know that anyone on this list is now happily recovered, or if you would like a name added to this list, please contact the editors.*

**PLEASE NOTE**

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**ENDPIECE**

Many thanks to the various contributors to this month's *The JOURNAL*. The next edition will be 11th & 12th January. Contributions should be with the editors by Monday 6th January. Please leave contributions at the Presbytery or email them to: [stjohnsjournal@googlemail.com](mailto:stjohnsjournal@googlemail.com)